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ABSTRACT

In the 1960s many teachers in the British secondary schools began a major effort to redefine their attitude toward the mass media in the light of certain social and cultural pressures. Changes in students made it necessary to provide materials of a less formal academic kind and to introduce literature, music, and art that would relate more integrally with the pupils' own tastes rather than shape their perceptions unwillingly into an elitist mold. No longer could the teaching of English rest secure on the postwar assurance that there was a set of explicit grammatical skills and a literary heritage to be taught. Discussions of the mass media were introduced during this period. Textbooks suggested newspaper and advertising analysis activities, introduced the topic of popular culture, and included some modern poetry. At the beginning of the decade a position of absolute condemnation of the mass media was prevalent, but by the late sixties the task appeared to be one of helping children to discriminate the good from the bad in popular culture. Teaching suggestions were given using popular magazines and television scripts. The syllabi of the examining boards also changed over this decade with popular literature being added to the lists. (MKM)

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TEACHING CULTURE DURING THE SIXTIES:

A BRITISH PERSPECTIVE.

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There has been a long tradition of hostility between English teachers and what they have chosen to see as 'the corrupting effects of the mass media.'[1] The discussion that follows attempts to direct attention to a decade in the development of British secondary education when some of the "harder" notions to do with the central separation of popular culture and English teaching began to weaken. In the 1960's many teachers began a major effort to re-define their attitude to the mass media in the light of certain social and cultural pressures. Often this meant simply putting their opposition to popular material in new terms; however, in many cases television, cinema, contemporary novels and the like became legitimate subjects for discussion if not detailed study. For the followers for example of the very influential F. R. Leavis[2] the central task for many teachers was centered on the "training of taste" — this clearly could not begin without opposition to the mass media being at first openly declared. However this prevailing view begged for many teachers all sorts of questions which necessitated going beyond dogmatic assertion and exploring the real nature of the "environment." Did the cheap appeals of advertisers characterize the whole of the mass media? Was sensationalism, stereotyping and the use of popular styles unique to the commercialism of the mid-twentieth century? Moreover it became difficult for those teachers who had been trained in progressive child-centered theories of education to reconcile the denial of the world of popular culture without at the same time disvaluing the child's own beliefs and sense of identity. These and other issues were raised at a time when a more visible youth culture that drew much of its sustenance from the mass media began to emerge. As school-rolls enlarged and the pressure to stay on longer increased it became more urgent for teachers to

provide materials of a less formally academic kind and introduce literature, music and art that would relate more integrally with the pupil's own taste rather than shape his perceptions unwillingly into an elitist mold.

What centrally becomes questioned is the validity of that elitist tradition; thinkers within the tradition had seldom thought our questions to do with the developmental aspects of literary taste – there were the "classics" – the "great tradition," complete with ideal meanings existing apart from the reader's own response to the work[3] and there was the rest, the soporific entertainment of the masses which belonged to the anarchic mess of everyday life. The "less able reader" is seen within this context as a deprived member of a meaningless and corrupting world. The tone at times can sound awfully patronizing, as in Holbrook's reference to creatures in this passage,

> "We need to be reminded of other qualities in human beings which are by no means dim, even in those we call dim. We need to bring ourselves to value these creatures as creatures, equal in terms of their wider needs, to develop what potentialities they have"
> (English for the Rejected, D. Holbrook [London 1966] p. 7)

Holbrook's concern for an energetically creative approach on the part of the teacher in structuring his lessons for the slower and less articulate can be seen as part of that general sixties concern with the under-privileged but also related to an earlier Arnoldian paternalism.[4] The power of literature as a superior reality is still present not as a resource that can speak to individuals in different ways and at different stages in their growth of heterogeneous quality, but as serving one main purpose,

> "backing up our contest against the corrupting effects of their environment with books that are often foreign to their sensibilities"
> (English for Maturity, p. 165).

If the child has a cultural background or all his nascent values and responses are seen in rather mystical fasion, as the remains of a vague and sentimentalised folk cultural that existed prior to the rise of mass education in the nineteenth century.

Thus Professor Bantock relates what he sees as the cognitive abilities of the village labourer who has,

> "a habit of interpreting phenemona by general ideas or abstract principle"

to the capacities of the modern worker,

> "this is still a fair characterization of what the modern folk can best cope with. The concentration of the immediacies of direct contact, specific relationships responded to as a feeling rather than an intellectual level"
> (G. Bantock, Education in an Industrial Society, p. 103)

For Bantock the extrapolation from this hypothesis is a two-tier educational system whereby an elite can continue to be educated in traditional ways, while the working class (too often in Bantock's terminology equated with the less able) has to be content with an altogether less rigorous curriculum consisting predominately of folk dance and practical skills.[5]

This policy of "cultural apartheid" was not the course pursued by a government that believed in increasing the opportunities of social mobility to the working class and saw it as a key element in economic growth. Indeed the reverse was the case – the investment in comprehensive schools was dramatic during this period from ten such schools in 1950, 130 in 1960, to 2,273 in 1974.[6] The government through various commissions in addition sanctioned somewhat nervously, a compromising attitude toward the mass media. The diffidence can be felt in the rhetoric of the Crowther Report that examined the education of 15 to 18 year olds in 1959. Of all age groups,

the teenagers are most exposed to the impact of the mass media of communication.

> "Once again, it is important to remember the strictly limited field in which education can operate. It could not, if it would, destroy the 'mass media' of communications, it ought not want to do so ... They give education new possibilities. But just because they are so powerful, they need to be treated with the discrimination only education can give. There is undoubtedly a duty on those who wield such power to use it responsibly."
> (Crowther Report, p. 66)

In the Newsom Report, four years later, there are some futuristic designs for new secondary modern schools which incorporate

> "a small sound, lighting and television studio where record playing, sound effects and radio equipment can be used and in which there is a simple television channel"
> (VII, p. 91 Newsom Report)

A more careful tone is restored in other areas of the report where there is an acknowledgment that television,

> "Like the other mass media tends to mirror and over-emphasize certain aspects of our society which are at variance with the values of school – not for nothing is the screen schoolmaster usually a buffoon. No wonder school is regarded as something to be tolerated"
> (Ibid., p. 465)

and later, echoing Crowther, there is an emphasis on the schools' need to offer, "counter-balancing assistance" (p. 475). So Newsom faces two ways, wanting to see television as "a medium in its own right" as "powerful forces in our culture and significant sources of language and ideas" (p. 474) and the desire to impose the Leavisite discriminatory apparatus upon it.

At the same time Newsom in particular is wanting to stress an older ethos, referring to

> "the civilising experience of contact with great literature" (p. 473)

and making what seems only a reluctant gesture towards more attention being given "to what pupils read at their own level." It is perhaps helpful to see

how these governmental attitudes relate to a wider discussion concerning the educational and social value of television. The older atmosphere of fear and suspicion of television among educationalists that characterised the fifties was about to give way to a less openly hostile climate.

In 1958 for example a four year enquiry was published on the effects of television on the young[7] and as Dr. Hilde Himmelweit, one of the members of that committee, comments it was particularly easy to find money for that kind of research in the fifties due to one dominant factor,

> "Fear is an effective promoter of financial support for research; interest in social change or in the positive aspects of a social institution less so"
> (New Society, 1.11.62)

and she goes on to comment that a second project was less easy to gain financial backing for, once the Nuffield enquiry had shown that television was far less "harmful" than had been feared. The conclusions of that earlier report require some comment; while it revealed that the set was on all evening more often in working-class than middle-class homes, they did feel that it was risky to then suggest that therefore T.V. has a more central place in working-class lives. Fifty per cent of secondary modern schoolchildren interviewed and seventy-five per cent of grammar school children did not rate T.V. as the most enjoyable part of their previous day. Nor did they find any decline in the amount of books read by children of a comparable age five years previously although they did comment that it had an effect on the kinds of books chosen, with an increasing amount of non-fiction being read.

An uncertain climate was created in which it was possible to television in terms of its democratic appeal as much as bemoan the medium

for popularizing serious issues. Amongst "high culture" critics such as Hannah Arendt and Randell Jarrell[8] there was a feeling that television inevitably trivialized because it was of necessity connected with entertainment values. Others were more optimistic. O. Handlin emphasises the multi-faceted nature of the media,

> "These media can tolerate good as well as bad contents, high as well as low art. Euripides and Shakespeare can perfectly well follow the western or quiz show"
> ("Mass Media and High Art," in Culture for the Millions p. 69)

while some other American commentators put the situation more boldly,

> "Our suspicion is ... that theorists of mass society do not favor but unconsciously resent an improvement in popular taste. We have come to the same conclusion that the major issue which disturbs the theorists of mass society is the egalitarianism of modern society"
> ("Journal of Social Issues," pp. 3-66, "America, Mass Society and Mass Media" [1960])

and Halloran writing in The New Left Review issued the challenge,

> "Has anyone established why the mass media at their best could not be a legitimate evolving art form in its own right?"
> (N.L.R., Jan.-Feb. 1961, p. 186)

While it became less easy to "blame" television and the like for producing socially harmful results it was still difficult to shift teacher's thinking from the essentially static cultural model that the cause and effect theory proposed. Thus seldom do we see in the textbooks and examination syllabuses of the early sixties any attempt to compare popular with traditional literature. Textbooks or examination questions then genuinely asked the pupil to exercise his own independent critical judgment concerning his responses to the world of popular culture that surrounded him.

Richard Hoggart has perhaps the clearest grasp, during the period, that the teacher's effort ought to be directed towards nurturing the child's own critical spirit. In reviewing N. Tucher's Understanding the Mass Media (1966) in some ways a pioneering book for teachers, Hoggart is quick to point out the strengths of the approach, characterized in the following passage,

> "In examining the mass media with children, the primary object must be to understand. Not to judge and condemn, but to understand. The teacher must help the children to see and hear. Only after they have done this can judgment come — Their judgment, not the teachers'"

While Hoggart accepts the basic premise of Tucher's argument,

> "He recognises that some of what is offered as 'high art' even by people on 'our side' is dead; and that if you bundle all the rest into a heap labelled mass art you may miss some signs of life"

The implications for practice are more complex than Tucher's nice "separate but equal" approach to the problem. A clear statement of Hoggart's approach is outlined in the preface to the important book, The Uses of Literacy. (1957)

> "I am inclined to think that books on popular culture often lose some of their force by inadequately relating their examinations of particular aspects of 'the people's life' to the wider life they live, and to the attitudes they bring to their entertainments"
> (Uses of Literacy, introduction)

This kind of awareness of the constant need to hold in mind the way popular culture is mediated in individual lives is generally not fully grasped by educationalists during this period. I want to highlight three main areas of English teaching where some attempts have been made to come to terms with the need to include popular culture in the English curriculum:

(1) In the preparation of textbooks, both the general graded variety leading up to C.S.E. and English "O" level language, and the ones concerned to teach "literature" (poetry and prose) as a separate element

(2) In the shape of examinations; particularly of literature, that were set during this period. I am interested to see the way a harder notion of the "literary heritage" gives way slowly, so that books of a more popular sort and appealing to children's own interests are included on various examination board's syllabuses.

(3) In the way that books designed for English teachers begin to deal with problems related to introducing aspects of the mass media into their classrooms, or in helping to understand the effects of popular culture upon the children that they teach.

1. Textbooks

The first thing to say about this area of English teaching is that there was a significant increase in the amount of published material available for the teacher, and that, second, little of it avoided presenting modified grammar exercises or the routine salute to "acceptable" literary models. Ridout's English Today (1947) in five volumes became the model for compilers of textbooks for the secondary school market. It went into innumerable impressions and set out with the object of offering "a complete training in the uses of the mother tongue." The "training" was achieved through a whole series of short passages on which different kinds of comprehension questions would be set; analyses of parts of speech and clauses formed a dominant emphasis, but also important was vocabulary extension and speech training through the presentation of especially contrived prose passages. Its great success through the sixties (and up to today in some schools) may have been due to its lack of any specific social or contemporary reference. It avoided the popular culture debate by ignoring as far as possible any precise reference to the twentieth century. The neat way Ridout had divided up the work for the teacher into years and terms appealed to them for obvious reasons of convenience. In homogeneous classes it was possible to plough

through the exercises without much reference to the specific needs of individual students.

This division appealed to other authors, for example E.C. Black and E.R. Wood in English (1961) in five volumes, designed for 'O' level candidates.[10] Fourth Year English, adventurously, after most of the work in the previous volumes had concentrated on similar comprehension exercises that Ridout had posed his pupils, set a "topic for discussion" on the press. Pupils were to study the front pages of two newspapers and examine them relatively uncritically,

> "To what extent do they?
> (a) break up the main news page into small items
> (b) use large or sensational headlines
> (c) emphasize one item of news
> (d) obviously take sides in a dispute"
> (Fourth Year English [London 1961] p. 81)

This is a nervous and uncertain approach to a new area, and aware of the controversial nature of the topic that they had broached the tendency (as with Tucker's Understanding the Mass Media) was to be neutral and "scientific" — any value judgments that needed to be made were left up to the teacher. This is again reflected in their curious section of advertising. They set their fourth year pupils some rather banal tasks;

> "What makes you think that the following are not genuine advertisements? In what ways do they resemble advertisements that you have seen?
> (a) Use purple SHRINKO
> ADDS TIGHTNESS TO WHITENESS!
> 9.63 out of every 10 housewives use SHRINKO
> SHRINKO — the soapless non-detergent with the latherless foam!"
> (Ibid., p. 82)

Rather than thinking through any really live and accurate ways the children can bring their whole active knowledge of advertising into play this kind of approach rended to trivialize the issues at stake.

An alternative method that some textbook compilers took in their approaches to the mass media, is to present passages which while praiseworthy in their dealing with aspects of popular culture, weigh the dice in favour of the teacher's conservative judgments by allowing them to be endorsed by the particular biases of the selected writers.

An example of this approach is provided by Pleasure in English (1961, reprinted 1965, 1968; J.R.C. Yglesias and F. Hughes) another "five decker" work (the allusion to Victorian publishing is appropriate). In volume five they have included a section entitled "The Appeal of Jazz and start off with a passage from a contemporary book on the subject,

> "Much of the cheapness of jazz has been imparted by its commercialization, which often creates taste and then fills it with 'pop-food' of little value. There is a distinction, jazz is essentially a social growth with deep roots" (q. Pleasure in English, Marshall Stern Jazz, pp. 169-70)

Here the appeal to the teacher's taste, who would by the early sixties have been satisfied that his early appreciation of the jazz trumpet was beginning to be culturally valorised, is carefully calculated. What it is set against is the world of pop, seen in largely negative terms, as containing only commercial values, a notion of "true jazz" is abstracted as being essentially apart from the commercial world. This kind of nonsense will not stand up to very much critical examination – Francis Newton's pioneering The Jazz Scene (London 1959), makes clear the inter-connections;

> "Jazz is not only a way of making music, but also one of making profits ... What the jazz-lover hears, therefore, depends not only on the creative urges of the musicians and other imponderables, but on the way that jazz is organized as a business ... Readers who believe that records make themselves and that horn players are fed by ravens sent down from heaven, like the prophet Elijah, are advised to pick themselves a less earthbound music to admire." (p. 155)

There is, furthermore, little awareness that the fifteen or sixteen year old child to whom such passages in textbooks are directed, has equally vital interests in the world of pop music as the "jazz-lover."

Other aspects of the mass media are not treated nearly as "liberally"; advertising, for example, is either ridiculed as in that earlier passage quoted above, or it is scathingly condemned as having totally corrupting influences — Mastery of English (J.R.C. Yglesias and I.R. Newisham) can be regarded as typical. This again is a "passage for discussion,"

> Whether we like it or not, more and more of the practical education of children today is coming out from mothers, as it once did, not from schools, as the way we supposed, but from advertisers. Television, disguised advertisements in comics, the women's magazines whose popularity and circulation continue to grow and the strips in daily papers have an even stronger influence" (q. Ann Chesney, 'The Guardian,' in Mastery of English, pp. 80-82)

Again we have here posed the old hostility between the school and what is taken to be "the environment." The school in these terms does "the educating" and that is seen wholly in a positive light — while "the environment" is full of negative and anti-educational forces. Basically this comes down to a crude understanding of the word "education" as being necessarily associated with moral uplift and opposed to forms of enjoyment by its very nature. To separate these two meanings is to deny their real and intimate connection in the lives of children — the environment necessarily does educate, but always in more

complex ways than many of the writers we have been discussing seem to realise – and so does the school educate often in a different way from the explicit intention of the teachers concerned. The old and unnecessary divisions in thinking about the total context of the mass media are reinforced again and again in the textbooks that have been examined.

However, it would be wrong to see the whole situation as one entirely opposed to the media in all their forms: Reflections (An English Course 14-18) (London 1963) by Clements, Dixon and Stratta, for example, contains a relatively good, if rather brief section on popular culture. Although the question, for example after a passage from Penelope Houston's The Contemporary Cinema, might be judged a little ambitious –

> "Make a study of the history of the cinema ... Attempt to make a short film."

There is at least reference to a world outside safe explicitly literary judgments, to a historical development and to technical skills that need to be mastered in order to fully come to terms with the qualities of the medium. Impact (London 1967) by R.H. Poole and P.J. Shepherd, a textbook designed for the same age range as Reflections, provides a similar series of thought-provoking passages that through their variety, wit and contrast suggest original approaches to popular material for the lively teacher. In their teacher's book under the section "Popular" they suggest that the teacher would find it,

> "fruitful to ask pupils to study and compare the words of folk-songs and pop-songs. One should try to direct the lesson to the point where the words do 'matter.' Pop songs are not entirely negligible, since the words of some of them do have a certain wit. If the teacher can seize upon examples, the class will be more inclined to listen to him than if he dismisses at one swoop all pop music"

It is difficult to tell how strong the implication is that it is somehow natural to dismiss pop music albeit at a second "swoop" — bu[illegible] least there is some attention extended to the language, although there are real dangers that an exclusively literary approach will distort the actual meaning of the song. However, the teacher is warned in a confiding way that,

> "contact with the commercial world often brings a degeneration. Where the degeneration is in language, the teacher has a point to make"
> (Impact, p. 55)

The writers are uncertain at this point as to the nature of the approval that should be given to the music — analysis of language is seen as "values" to be preserved.

As far as poetry anthologies go, these retain the conventional pattern inherited from the Palgrave and Newbolt editions, that is well established poets of the past are neatly assembled and indexed, with fairly little attention given to the kind of subject that might interest children, other than possibly war.

The presentation is usually remarkably dull and stereotyped, particularly in the earlier part of the period we are discussing. Jim Hunter's Modern Poets (London 1968) breaks away a little from the format by grouping some modern and less anthologized poets together in intelligent selections. The other main exceptions to the trend are John Welch's Living Language (London 1966) which integrates an eclectic choice of poems with imaginative questions and other prose passages, and Voices (London 1968). This series of textbooks in three volumes, although mainly intended for children in the early years of secondary school, was to demonstrate to many what had been lacking

throughout much that was available. Here photographs, reproductions from classical paintings, varied typography do not illustrate as much as complement an equally varied range of verse from haiku to traditional songs, from Christopher Smart to Theodore Roethke. Voices 2 contains Brian Patten's, "Where are you now Batman?" – the first pop poem, as far as I can discover to appear in a school anthology. Later anthologists cannot fail to have been influenced by a radical broadening of the conception of the literature textbook, and so we have M. and P. Benton in their Touchstone books almost apologising for connecting teaching with poetry (Summerfield in Voices had emphasised the idea of enjoyment above instruction),

> "the idea of 'teaching poetry' is itself suspect ... they (teachers) can help considerably by suggesting ideas for discussion, by showing different approaches to poems, and by encouraging pupils to write poems themselves"

It is hard to remember, having glanced at the visual impact of these kinds of volumes, still not the complete answer to the problem of a vital engagement with popular culture, the rather dull and solemn textbooks available earlier in the decade. To remind ourselves we can return to Holbrook's collection, Irony, Honey, Gold, first published in 1961. In these volumes the author's hostility to popular as well as ethnic culture is never very far away. In Book Three of the anthology he talks about rhythm in poetry,

> "And so rhythm in songs like that of the Nazi 'Horst Wessel' song, can send people to war, or to live worse rather than better, to be more cruel to one another rather than kinder. This is true of the monotonous rhythm of commercial music. Those who wrote it and put it over have found that they can 'send' hundreds of thousands of 'cats' into hysterical states by writing music which is cruder than that of primitive tribes"

The aggressive and ridiculing tone, which pays scant attention to any necessary discriminations that one may justifiably make about any art form, is less well controlled in this section as he is wanting to speak to both teachers and pupils at the same time. He therefore wants to appear knowledgeable on the pupils' own terms by referring to "cats" but in a jeering fashion and at the same time exploit the voice of education by referring to historical parallels in an overtly schoolmasterish way. The underlying attitudes are reinforced by two D. H. Lawrence poems chosen for Volumes Three and Four — "When I went to see the Film" is not one of the best poems that Lawrence wrote and represents an unexamined rejection of the new medium,

> "When I went to the film, and saw all the black-and-white feelings that nobody felt, and heard the audience sighing and sobbing with all the emotions that none of them felt" (p. 77)

In Volume Four another obscure D. H. Lawrence poem is uncovered, "The Great Newspaper Editor to his Subordinate" which although far wittier than the poem above, fuels Holbrook's general distaste for popular culture. There is little to balance the unconventional choices of the Lawrence poems, in fact most of the works selected are rather over-anthologized school poetry pieces. The general attitude also coincides with the view Holbrook expresses in English for Maturity, where he refers to,

> "the new illiteracy of the cinema, television, comic strip, film-strip and popular picture paper" (p. 37).

It is difficult to speculate about the sort of practice in English classrooms that this proliferation of many different kinds of textbooks led to. Some teachers slavishly kept to the Ridout style books while others,

at the other extreme, prepared their own material, using television and the reprographic machinery in the school. Probably the typical teacher used a combination of both – particularly when faced with mixed ability situations in the new comprehensive schools.

Ideas for Teachers

By the later sixties it was at least more difficult to maintain the "hard" Holbrookian position of absolute condemnation of the mass media. The job now was to help the child to "discriminate,"

> "to evaluate and to reject much of the trash that is poured out on the printed page"

as Connie Alderson was to put it in her book, Magazines Teenagers Read (London 1968). However, despite all the attacks on the conservatism, the narrowness of the range of feeling, the rampant commercialism implicit in the whole enterprise of teenage magazines, the latter work does little in getting us to understand their obvious appeal. There is hardly any indication in the book that the author, at least some time in her life, actually enjoyed one of the magazines she discusses, its main effect, rather, is to leave the teacher feeling guilty if the magazine still appeals. Concomitant with this hostile posture, the connections between young people's lives and the content is seen only in negative terms as the satisfying of fantasy needs, to be condemned. The sensitivity that Murdock and Phelps bring to their study for the Schools Council[12] over this issue about the context in which the productions are read. They point out that schools are often little help in responding to the profound changes of adolescence and the needs of young adults in search of a mature sexual identity. School,

they argue frequently, points the child the other way, towards the need to pass important public examinations; the magazines are thus seen as filling a gap that school provides few answers for. Nor is there enough attention given to the way pupils can often express themselves through the use of popular styles – Edward Blishen is sensitive about this in Roaring Boys,

> "I remember once tearing up a comic of Dibbens. He shouted and said, just audibly, 'Rat!' Half the boys I took for art were my enemies because I wouldn't let them copy comic strips. To them comics were art. In English lessons it was the same"
> (Roaring Boys, [Bath 1974] p. 84)

Moreover there is very little evidence that adolescents who read these magazines are unknowing about the conventions that operate or unable to discriminate within the range of what is offered. Indeed, most of what we know points the other way. In Connie Alderson's study there are signs that some "discriminating" reading is going on, albeit not very explicitly. Where the author is troubled is in the consequences of this enthusiasm for popular reading in schools. Some of the girls interviewed,

> "spontaneously expressed aversion to reading books connected with school work, or to reading full length books for pleasure. These books were spoken of with derision, in fact there was downright hostility towards them" (p. 97)

This leads Alderson to "batten down the hatches" even more firmly in the amount that the schools should attempt to "compromise" with the child's taste,

> "Some pupils and young students respond better to modern fiction than to the classics for which there may be a built-in hostility. But whatever the book it should never be second-rate. To offer the second-rate because it will be welcomed is to give in and go half-way towards magazine reading" (p. 3)

The idea set up here of a perpetual hostility between clearly demarcated areas of reading is a myth that many teachers still cling to. Barbara Hardy is to put the point clearly when she refers to a "dangerously excessive concern for judgment" which shows itself in many ways, in an important article,[13]

> "We are not simply asking the inexperienced in literature and life to arrive very speedily at a mature judgment. We are also doing something which I take it we would all agree to be undesirable — we are driving a wedge between two cultures, between the culture of the young and the culture of those who are older, of the so-called 'mature.'"

She goes on to suggest that there is too much emphasis on this concern for constant criticism,

> "It seems to me very often out of touch with the facts of our own maturity and immaturity"

and suggests that "invidious comparisons" between the "high brow" and the "cheap" — prevents us coming to a full understanding of the potency much popular art possesses for us.

It is articles such as Barbara Hardy's, the work of magazines such as "Screen Education" which are to help shift the balance to judging popular culture in its own terms.[14] This changing climate, that some teachers seemed a little slow in realizing, was also helped along by another significant contribution to the discussion of the mass media, Hall and Whannel's The Popular Arts (London 1964). Here the concern is not to make crude judgments about popular and elitist taste as much as sympathetically to understand the connections of the newer popular art to earlier forms of imaginative fantasy,

> "popular fantasy relies upon familiar themes and situations and follows a recognized pattern unchanged, except in incidentals, by place or period. Yet within these acceptable patterns, in each new period we find

> the various elements assembled in new ways: in fact quite new experiences and feelings are being dealt with. The writer responds, often without being aware of it, to a subterranean source within the collective subconscious of his society, and embodies these symbols within his story, and under pressure from this source the forms of the stories inevitably change" (The Popular Arts [London 1964] p. 179)

At last there is some realization that forms such as the Gothic melodrama in comic and film have their roots in a whole tradition of popular romanticism.[15] In talking about Raymond Chandler's characters the authors stress that their two-dimensionality is akin to the kind of characterization in a Ben Jonson play, while Chandler's use of the one line "crack"

> "has the same pointed surface effect as the rhymed couplet or the epigram in Restoration comedy" (p. 163)

This is helping teachers brought up in an exclusively literary tradition, to come to terms with popular art's peculiar quality and understand the kinds of conventions that operate.

Those opposed to popular culture in all its forms, critics such as David Holbrook, seem not very interested in making for teachers or themselves any important distinctions about popular culture. Reviewing The Popular Arts for "The Use of English," Holbrook comments on the section that deals with crime,

> "Raymond Chandler they choose as better than Mickey Spillane because he shows by his ironic asides that he knows what he is doing. I see no value in such 'discriminations' if we are to have muck, lets have it outright, sheer muck, rather than that which pretends by snobbery or irony to be superior" (The Use of English Vol. XVII no. 3, Spring 1966)

The language verges on the hysterical as prejudice takes over from reason. The moderate position is now veering towards the Hall of Whannel approach and away from the Holbrook posture. Geoffrey Summerfield, the editor of

Voices, admits in 1969 to a changed cultural situation,

> "We ... are the children of the revolution; not only of the 'silent social revolution' but also of a cultural revolution which has seen not only a hardening of cultural divisions – elitist vs. popular culture – now belatedly breaking down, but also the emergence of film, radio and television. One need not be a disciple of McLuhanism to recognise that such extensions of the medium of communication have not only changed our lives but should also be changing our notions of education" (Directions in the Teaching of English, ed. D. Thompson [London 1969] p. 95)

While Marland in the same volume echoes similar sentiments[16] and backs that up by being a pioneer editor of television scripts for schools.[17] In a "Use of English" article (Spring 1967) "Z Cars and the Teacher" he makes some interesting observations about the possible uses of the genre in the classroom,

> "Pupils can be asked to view these plays, and read the scripts with three related but separate aims; the enjoyment of effective drama; the study of source material for work in television appreciation; the discussion of concrete situations and characters for the understanding of contemporary social themes" (p. 214)

This way of integrating the media into the classroom meant some degree of loosening of what Basil Bernstein calls the "classification" of educational knowledge.[18] To watch a film with a class is to share in an educational relationship that is less hierarchical and ritualized, and depends on open discussion. The older attitude must, in Bernstein's terms,

> "socialize (the pupil) into knowledge frames which discourage connections with everyday realities"

The degree to which some English departments moved during the sixties towards an "integrated code," as team teaching became more acceptable particularly when showing a course of films to two or more groups, would make an interesting

study in itself. What is clear is that there was a great deal of nervousness and confusion about the way film and television could be used in the classroom. There was a world of difference between the outlook of a T. R. Barnes who, writing in The Use of English in 1956, commented,

> "how distorted a view of a play (of Shakespeare) the film can give!" (and adding) "I expect the flicks to be twaddle, and my expectations are never disappointed" (Use of English Autumn 1956 Vol. VIII)

and the article that appeared six years later in the same journal by N. Tucker. The latter author writes about his experiences teaching Shakespeare to non-examination groups,

> "I use his plays roughly as film scripts and compare his artistic conventions with those of the cinema. I am aware" (he adds apologetically), "that this method deals too thoroughly with his dramatic skill as opposed to his poetry" (Use of English, Vol. XIX no. 2)

Tucker in this article seems to be addressing the readers who would share Barnes' prejudices about films – and would be appalled by such tampering with the "bard" – therefore Tucker adds the reservation that he would only use this method with non-examination groups, or upper streams who have completed their exams.

This brings us to our next topic – the way that examiners attempted to respond to the shifting in attitudes towards the mass media, and to the changing conception of literature teaching.

Examinations

With the renewed attention to the "less able" during the period outlined, it was increasingly apparent that the traditional 'O' level syllabuses could not cope with providing the certification necessary for thousands of pupils who,

if no alternative were provided, would have little to show for five years of secondary schooling of a nationally approved standard. Its need is referred to in the Crowther Report of 1959, for those

"who have not the ability to pass G.C.E." (p. 124)

It was felt from the outset that in the design of the new course the teachers themselves were to have a large measure of control. Before examining the way the new English syllabuses were conceived, it is necessary to refer back to the conservative nature of G.C.E. exams in 'O' level literature, and these provide the clearest model as to the traditional mode of assessment for sixteen year old pupils.

Before 1960 most examining boards had offered only one syllabus which included attention to a Shakespeare play, a poetry anthology and a novel. The novel titles were usually the most up to date, with Southern Universities Board prescribing in 1958 Heyerdahl's "The Kon-Tiki Expedition" (1950). Other boards were considerably less pioneering, detailing a Wells, a Conrad or a Kipling novel to be studied. In the period 1960-1962, three notable examining boards changed the structure of their syllabuses: in 1960-1961 J.M.B. offered a Paper B — which it termed "experimental," in 1961-1962 the University of London provided their "Syllabus B" while Cambridge University in 1961 was to list a "first alternative" and a "second alternative" approach. These latter syllabuses tended to shift attention from individual works to specific authors. Frequently the authors chosen from the "Syllabus B" paper were more "experimental" as far as the previous standards of the examining board went. Graham Greene was suggested by Cambridge (1961) and Sean O'Casey's Juno and the Paycock being offered as the alternative to a Shakespeare play by J.M.B. (1961). The more modern emphasis was clear although many examining

boards attempted to keep a balance between newer and older works — the University of London's Syllabus B for 1965-1966 represents a typical compromise in its novel selection,

> "Silas Marner, Puddn'head Wilson, Kipps, Winston Churchill's My Early Life, Sir Arthur Grimble, A Pattern of Islands, Twentieth Century Short Stories (Barnes & Egford)"

Mark Twain, as far as I have been able to discover, was one of the first "non-English" authors to be selected in an 'O' or 'A' level exam. This may have been due to Leavis's own approval of the novel in 1955.[19] To compare the above syllabus to one between the years 1955-1959 is to see more sharply a trend towards approved and therefore more "examinable literature" being seen as less centred around a vague notion of a "cultural heritage" based on a notion of "Englishness" and more directed towards child-centred themes. Many of the titles quoted above are significantly about "growing up" and this ties in with a less clearly specified notion of genre so that the autobiographical My Early Life can be studied alongside Twentieth Century Short Stories. The Associated Examining Board as early as 1959 were feeling their way toward this less "categorized" notion of literature with their avowal to

> "encourage wide reading and to relate literature to modern life."

So it comes as a little of a surprise that when C.S.E. propose to extend the approach begun by the G.C.E. boards, that the syllabuses they suggested should have provoked as much controversy as they did.

Here it is necessary to judge what was being offered at C.S.E. In a survey that D. Butts carried out in an article for "The Use of English"

entitled, "Second Rate Books for Second Rate Children" (Vol. XVIII number 4, Summer 1966) the author is outraged at his findings. He lists 75 fiction writers recommended and comments,

> "It is clear even from this brief listing, that something is going wrong. At a conservative estimate almost one third of the authors named above have no place in any serious study of literature (Tiger in the Smoke, The Cruel Sea, Rogue Male, The Crowthers of Bankdam). But the real core of the problem does not so much lie here, for the obvious rubbish can easily be weeded out, as in what the major recommendations reveal. The most popular book was George Orwell's Animal Farm recommended by ten boards. Then came John Wyndham's The Day of the Triffids (8), followed by Lord of the Flies, Jane Eyre and Huckleberry Finn (7 each), with Great Expectations and A Town like Alice close behind (6 each). For while no one would deny the relative merits of Orwell and Golding, or even John Wyndham, for that matter they are relative, second rate classics for secondary modern children" (p. 298)

Butts in this extract reveals himself in the orthodox Holbrookian line, insisting more or less that there are works, "every child ought to experience" (Holbrook, English for Maturity, p. 184) and taking little account of the circumstances of the individual children being taught. What is proposed under the "Reading" chapter and appendix of English for Maturity (pp. 152-203) would doubtless conform to Butts's ideal, with little concession given to "popular taste" and a major endorsement of the "children's classics."

What is set up of course is an over-confident notion of the "first-rate" and fiction of a lesser order – with an absence of any analysis of any overlap which might profitably inform both areas of reading. We come back to Barbara Hardy's concern to be true to our own experience of reading rather than establish alienated categories that attempt to create false distinctions between maturity and immaturity. Why should Golding's Lord of the Flies be a book that is relegated to the "second division" of Bate's list, one

above those works not worthy "in any serious study of literature?" Interestingly enough, the 'O' level boards are in a certain amount of agreement with Butts, at least in the earlier part of our period — they do not see the novel as an "examinable" text until 1970 when the Associated Examining Board breaks the silence. Why it should be only "half-way acceptable" for suitable literary study is a question we might speculate on. Perhaps it has something to do with its difficult status in the sixties — being taken up as a cult novel in the United States and topping the best-seller lists, while at the same time the subject of a film that was given an 'X' certificate in England. Moreover critical approval was a little slow in coming — The Guardian wrote that it had "a tendency to be too explicit" (28.9.1954) while The Spectator referred to it as "a remarkable bitter piece of writing" (1.10.1954). Only in 1957 does The Kenyon Review take it up in an explicitly critical-academic way, and call attention to Golding as an important modern novelist.[20] Pincher Martin (1956), published two years later than Lord of the Flies, is taken up far more swiftly by the G.C.E. examiners. Lord of the Flies had a far more obvious appeal to schoolchildren, and this indeed was how it was marketed to teachers and schools. Two explicit comments to the school are included in the publisher's "blurb,"

> "Only a man who has had to cope with boys as embryo individuals and then, the very next minute, as a bowling mob, could have written this book" (Time & Tide)

and The Times,

> "Mr. Golding knows exactly what boys are like; he has a compelling imagination; it is with vivid realism that he describes the disintegration of the untried and precious civilization ... a most absorbing and instructive tale"

The closeness to experience, the explicitness of the tale were perhaps a little disturbing at first to the 'O' level examiners, but as C.S.E. became seen as an area of limited experiment for English teachers it was quickly taken up by many boards. The emphasis on choice of more child-centred themes also worked in its favor. The notion of thematic work had been implicit in the structure of many textbooks in the later part of the period, and C.S.E. gave a positive stimulus to this movement. The unifying of reading around the level of content marks a somewhat new stage in the teaching of literature. Rather than seeing literature as a body or discrete texts loosely referring to a "literary heritage," understood in their own terms under the abstractions of plot, characterization and theme, this new emphasis brings to the fore the shared preoccupations of writers and thus makes what they have to say perhaps more accessible to children struggling with similar "themes" in the creative section of the examination. The artificial barrier that some textbook writers had observed between language and literature could begin to be broken down.[21] Popular non-fiction writing could thus more justifiably be included in literature syllabuses, given the new thematic concerns. Further down the secondary school, particularly in the new comprehensives of the sixties, this changed conception of literature allows English to be part of an integrated studies programme in the first two years.[22]

Although C.S.E. examines both language and literature together, there is still a wide separation between the nature of the tasks the pupils are asked to perform in the two areas. Section One usually requires a "continuous piece of writing," drawing on the candidates' "personal knowledge, interests and experience." While there is opportunity to write in modes other than

narrative, such as letters and newspaper reports, in Paper One of the East Anglian Board for 1968 there is a good deal of critical comprehension work to be done upon newspapers and advertisements. However one does gain the impression looking through these exam syllabuses that these two references to the mass media are merely gestures. The tendency of the paper is towards literary criticism rather than attempting to elicit responses of a more creative or expressive kind towards the mass media.

Of course the later history of examinations and teaching is to reveal a schism, whereby film, communications, photography, and a varied amount of Mode Three style syllabuses examining anything from pop music to multi-racial society are taught under English, Music, General Studies and other headings. It is rather bewildering to note this burgeoning of courses in the later part of the sixties and seventies. English, given this context and with the emergence of the "open sixth," was again vulnerable to a wide variety of interpretations. No longer could it rest secure on the post-war assurance that there was a set of explicit grammatical skills to teach and a "literary heritage" to be familiarized. Multi-cultural classrooms, mixed ability teaching and the raising of the school leaving age disturbed the complacency somewhat in the need that teachers felt to discover new strategies to cope in a class that simply could not be taught by the use of a single textbook and the teacher directing from the desk. In this confusing time for the teacher two ideologies as to the teacher's relationship to culture are formed. One by James Britton in Language and Learning (London 1970), concentrating on the younger learner synthesises for the teacher the understanding of the child's imaginative development which psychologists and workers in related

fields have proposed. It is a very wise book which is to have an enormous impact, yet ultimately it is romantic and avoids seeing culture as critical in the child's development – it leads to the language ideology of Language in Use where a technical handbook is offered and the job of the English teacher is to teach the language as a set of functional skills according to particular contexts that a young adult may be faced with in a modern industrialized society.[23] The second ideology is more explicitly directed to the education of working-class pupils, and most notably connected with Searle – it has an explicit Marxist intention – culture is seen as an aspect of class consciousness – children are made to understand their exploitation in the capitalist system.[24]

The need to relate popular culture and English teaching is still as strong as ever, but now there is the added pressure to see it as an explicitly ideological question. Related to this is the whole perception of English teaching itself and the function it is seen as playing in the modern school. I do not want to overdramatise the situation too much, many teachers do not see the area as a problem, it depends on where they are located, but in the inner-city areas it has to be a problem or the teacher is not thinking seriously about his job. Essentially it boils down to how far the teacher is prepared to engage with the particular lives and experiences of his pupils and draw on their modes of response and resources and how far at a certain stage in the secondary education process the process of aesthetic response is to be channelled and ritualised in the literary critical grooves.

To sum up briefly the developments traced so far, it is possible to see how the old reliance on literary criticism as an impartial, ahistorical ideology comes to be threatened at the end of the period. We can no longer

deal with the cultural and aesthetic problems of a "multi-cultural classroom" in an adequate way. The past twenty years or so have seen its usefulness decline in a variety of areas and the sensitive English teacher has been forced to look around for other approaches and techniques. No longer would the comfortably complacent and superior attitude to the mass media be as easy to assume, nor would a teaching of literature which attempted to bypass the student's own critical judgments be as unproblematic and "natural" as an earlier generation of teachers had found it. However, for the time being there has been a vacuum, a profound uncertainty as to the way forward and as a result a beweildering range of teaching styles and theories co-existing together.

FOOTNOTES

[1]See in particular Mathieson's The Preachers of Culture (London 1975) where she traces the origins of the animosity between the new mass society and the emerging English curriculum in some detail.

[2]See the book he co-edited with Denys Thompson, Culture and Environment (London 1960)

[3]See R. Williams' comment in Communications, "In teaching the classics we are normally not critical enough. We often substitute a dull and inert appreciation which nobody can go on believing in for long. But then in teaching and commenting on all other work, we are normally so confident and so fierce that it is difficult to believe we are the same people. 'All that muck in the cinemas and on television' too often follows the routine remarks on the charm of the 'Essays of Elia' and neither does anybody any good" (London 1966) p. 12

[4]See Arnold on Education, ed. G. Sutherland (London 1973) p. 106

[5]See G. Bantock's Education and Industrial Society (London 1973)

[6]See M. Kogan Education and Politics (London 1978)

[7]See The Nuffield Inquiry, Oppenheim, Vince and Himmelweit (1958)

[8]See Randell Jarrell's comment, "Part of you is being starved to death and the rest of you is being stuffed to death" ("Society and Culture Daedalus, Vol. 89, no. 2 (Spring 1960) pp. 278-87

[9]Quoted Hoggart, Use of English (Winter 1966) pp. 160-161

[10]'O' levels are school leaving exams designed for the more 'academic' secondary school pupil, while C.S.E. (Certificate of Secondary Education) were phased in after Newsom for the majority of sixteen year olds, who were formerly thought unqualified for any academic courses.

[11]See T. Lovell, "Sociology of Aesthetic Structures and Contextualism" (London 1972) in Sociology of Mass Communications (London 1972)

[12]See Schools Council Working Papers 35 (London 1971)

[13]"The Teaching of English; life, literature and literary criticism," English in Education, 2, 1968.

[14]See SCREEN – first published in 1959, by the Society for Education in Film and Illusion, 29, Old Compton Street, London, WIV 5 PL England.

[15]See The Popular Arts, Hall and Whannel (London, 1964)

[16]See "Mainstream" in Directions in the Teaching of English, ed. D. Thompson (London 1969)

[17]See Conflicting Generations (London 1967)

[18]"On Classification and framing of educational knowledge" in Class, Code and Control (London 1971)

[19]See F. R. Leavis's Introduction to Puddn'head Wilson, Zodiac Press edition (London 1955)

[20]See John Peter, "The Fables of William Golding" in The Kenyon Review, Vol. XIX no. 4, Autumn 1957.

[21]See R. O. Malley and D. Thompson's Introduction to English Four (2nd edition, 1967)

[22]See Halfway There, Benn and Simon (London 1970).

[23]See Britton's brief discussion about the relative power of the mass media versus individual reading Language and Learning (London 1972) pp. 264-266. See also Inglis' comment in Ideology and the Imagination, "I assimilate him (Britton) to the language study movement in general ... because Language and Learning also empties language and morality and its history. It only gestures towards the difficulties involved in understanding an art and its culture" (London 1975) p. 82

[24]See Chris Searle's interview in Teaching London Kids No. 7 "I don't believe in sheer creativity. I think that creativity starts from a particular emphasis and for the children round here this has to be totally allied to what is going on outside the classroom. This will mean in the end an emphasis on their oppression and accompanying that their will and determination to resist that oppression. A lot of sheer creativity tends to encourage children to look only at themselves and this can be dangerous ... Imagination can become so deeply introverted that the social and political situation becomes irrelevant."